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Thesis

HOSEA'S CONCEPTION OF GOD

by

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HOSEA'S CONCEPTION OF GOD

1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this thesis is to survey the field of Biblical literature and modern scholarship with reference to Hosea's Conception of God; to analyze Hosea's idea of the relation existing between God and man. Questions developing from this are: "Did the experience of Hosea's life have any influence upon the prophet's conception of God?" "What did Hosea give to religion which was lacking in the message of the preceding prophets?" "What is Hosea's view as to the requirements which God makes of man?" "Has Hosea's idea of God contributed anything to the conception widely held regarding Divine and human relationship?"

The problem is one of importance. Each prophet preceding Hosea had given his interpretation of Yahweh, but Hosea has contributed a new element in the conception of God. Hosea was to learn what no prophet had learned before, and what no prophet ever could have learned through mechanical revelation from without--that the essence of Divine nature was not justice, but love.[1] Hosea, in his mixed and harrowing feelings toward Gomer, his wife, is himself a type of Jehovah. His loathing

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1. Cheyne, T. K., Cambridge Bible, Vol. Hosea, P. 30
   Hosea, Chapter 6:6

abhorrence of her sin, his flaming indignation at her infidelity; and, stronger than either, his tender compassion at the depth of degeneracy to which she has reduced herself, are but a reflection of Jehovah's feelings toward His people. Hosea's work is to give expression to this newly-found truth.[1] The prophet added a new element to the existing idea of God when he placed love rather than justice in the foreground of his thought as Jehovah's supreme requirement. He appealed to love rather than to the fear of God in the motives he urged for the realization of his ethical ideals in the life of the nation.[2]

The importance of the problem rests also upon the fact that Hosea's prophecy is a story of passion second only to that by which the world's redemption was won; the book throbs with the agony of an indescribable woe.[3] Again, this study is important because the love experience of Hosea was a parallel of Divine love, because like it, the prophet's was ill-requited, outraged, wounded well-nigh unto death, and yet triumphant even unto salvation.[4]

Hosea's conception of God has had an important bearing upon the religious thought of to-day. With a deeper insight, a keener sympathy, a tenderer heart, he supplied the motive power of the religious life when he drew back the veil

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1. Cheyne, T. K., Cambridge Bible, Vol. Hosea, p. 31
   Hosea, Chapter 2:2-23
2. Bade, W. F., Old Testament in the Light of To-day, p. 154
   Hosea, Chapter 6:6
3. Houghton, L. S., Hebrew Thought and Life, p. 288
4. Ibid, p. 288

which hid the face of God and revealed that truth which is the life blood of the Christianity of today, that the 'heart' of the Eternal is most wonderfully kind.[1]

Hosea offers to humanity a religion that is not stereotyped, but is sufficiently flexible to be permanent and to adjust itself to very different social conditions.[2]

A subject, then, which throws additional light upon the character of God, one which relates an experience approaching Divine love, one which has important bearing upon the solution of today's religious problems, such a subject merits deepest study and concentration.

The only available source material dealing with this study is the prophecy of Hosea which is found in the Old Testament. However, much enlightenment has been obtained by the use of Commentaries which interpret the prophecy of Hosea.

Biographies of Hosea are not lacking, which treat of Hosea's time and career, but thus far the writer of this thesis has been unable to locate any systematic and analytic treatment of Hosea's Conception of God.

The corrupt state of the text of Hosea and the style so broken and incapable of logical division have given rise to questions of the authenticity of the book of Hosea.

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1. Hastings, L. S., Hebrew Thought and Life, p. 288
2. Peake, A. S., Brotherhood in the Old Testament, p. 26

The doubtful passages fall into four groups:

1. References in Hosea to Judah are for the most part the work of a Judaistic editor. The principal cases are the following: chapter 1:7, chapter 3:10, 12, 13, 14, chapter 6:4, chapter 10:11, chapter 12:2, chapter 6:11, chapter 8:14, chapter 11:12. Although in the great majority of cases no sufficient motive can be discovered to explain the Hoseanic origin of these passages, still we cannot agree that Hosea never in a single case referred to Judah.

2. It is impossible to reconcile with Hosea's situation and declarations certain passages referring to Israel's future, the so-called Messianic allusions. The prophet plainly represents Israel's ruin as close at hand and irretrievable. The Messianic passages, therefore, are entirely inconsistent with Hosea's point of view. This material is unquestionably from exilic times. The most important pieces of this group are the following: chapter 2:1-3, chapter 2:8-9, chapter 2:16-18, chapter 2:20-25, chapter 3:5, chapter 11:8-11, chapter 14:2-9.

3. The third group includes phrases and sentences of a technical, archaeological, or historical character, inserted by the way of expansion and explanation. Here belong: chapter 4:13d, "for good is its shade"; chapter 5:6 "with their flocks and their herds"; chapter 8:8b "as a vessel wherein none delighteth"; chapter 10:14b "as Shalman spoiled Betharbel in the day of battle"; chapter 12:14, magnifying the prophetic phase of Moses's work.

4. The fourth group will include miscellaneous glosses and interpolations for which, perhaps, no special motive may be discovered. As examples of this kind may be cited: chapter 8:4, "that they may be cut off"; chapter 9:8a, "with my God."

5. Chapter 14:10 stands by itself, and is a product of the later wisdom period.[1]

II. Record of Life and Character and Times of Hosea

Because ~~of~~ the experiences of Hosea's life were responsible for the convictions he held concerning God, the most satisfactory manner of beginning this study is to set forth the various events which this prophet passed through in the course of his years. In the light of these experiences it will be possible to interpret Hosea's idea of God and of the Divine requirements of man.

A. Hosea's Early Life

Hosea is a name that was characteristic of Northern Israel; it was borne by the last king of the Ten Tribes,[2] and also originally by Joshua.[3] Nothing is known of Hosea's father whose name was Beeri,[4] but there was a Jewish fancy that he too was a prophet.[5] Dr. Cheyne's assertion that Hosea was a native of the northern kingdom needs no proof to

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1. Harper, W. R., International Critical Commentary, Amos and Hosea, Introduction, p. clix-clxii
2. 2 Kings, 15:30
3. Deuteronomy, 32:44
4. Hosea, 1:1
5. Cheyne, T. K., Cambridge Bible, Vol. Hosea, p. 9

anyone who has read his book.[1] The prophet seems to have been affected by the genial moods of nature in the north, and to have partaken of that expansive, childlike character, which as a matter of fact led his country people astray, but which issued in loving obedience to the God of love.[2]

B. Dates of Hosea

The period of the prophet's activity falls little later than that of Amos, but before the outward collapse of Samaria. The beginning of his work dates from the time when the house of Jehu was still upon the throne, for his earliest prophecy was directed against that dynasty.[3] Since Zechariah, Jeroboam II's son, was only able to maintain himself six months,[4] and since with his fall the house of Jehu came to an end, it is just to conclude that Hosea began to prophesy while Jeroboam was yet on the throne.[5] That he lived in the midst of the period of anarchy which followed the death of Jeroboam II (i. e. 743-736 B. C.) seems to be shown by the allusions in his writings. The lack of reference of any kind to the Syro-Ephraimitish war of Pekah and Rezin against Judah, (Isaiah 7, 2 Kings 15:37-38) would indicate that Hosea was not in active service at that time (734 B. C. - 733 B. C.). The certain dates then are (743 B. C. and 734 B. C.). How

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1. Cheyne, T. K., Cambridge Bible, Vol. Hosea, p. 10
2. Cheyne, T. K., Cambridge Bible, Vol. Hosea, p. 10
3. Hosea, Chapter 1:4
4. 2 Kings, Chapter 15:8
5. Welch, A. C., Religion of Israel under the Kingdom, p. 104

much earlier than 743 Hosea may have preached cannot be determined.

C. Hosea's Occupation and Social Standing

Concerning Hosea's occupation and social standing we are only able to draw inferences. No information is to be found to the effect that Hosea was a member of the prophets' society. An interesting conjecture is that he was a priest, but there is as little evidence in its favor as against it. His intimacy with life of every kind, in nature and among men, does not oppose this view. His acquaintance with life in general, and especially with that of the priests, taken in connection with his familiarity with the plans of both political parties, and his intimate knowledge of his country's history may reasonably warrant us in the opinion that he occupied a "distinguished position" as a citizen in his native land.[1]

D. Condition of the Country

The great part of Hosea's work accordingly fell in a period when the central authority was weak; and some of the results of that anarchy shine through the pages of his book. The petty kings, who ruled so long as their party held together and who represented no more than the intrigues of the hour, maintained themselves by dependence on the foreigner, or by appealing to the passions of their supporters; they were

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1. Harper, W. R., International Critical Commentary, Amos and Hosea, Introduction, p. 142
~~2. Hosea, chapter 1:1~~

kings whom Israel made, not Yahweh.[1] The last stay for decent justice went with this breaking down of the royal power. The kingdom had weakened the older system by which justice was administered among the men in Israel; and now, when the kingdom was weak, the judges could not check the disorder. Every greedy appetite was loose in Israel;[2] the people were masterless, losing the high ideals which could make of them a nation.[3]

E. Hosea's Instruction

Where did Hosea receive his education, or what literature influenced him? The book of Amos was known in Northern Israel and would have special interest for Hosea, although Amos and Hosea are at the opposite poles of style and, except in a few incidents, we cannot say that the younger prophet had any clear allusions to the older prophets.[4]

F. Hosea's Emotional Nature

Hosea was not so much an intellect, he was a great overflowing heart. He could not think things out and reason. He sways like a pendulum from one extreme to another, now blazing with indignation against the people's wickedness and madness, next lamenting over Israel like a mother over her only lost son. Emotion is the Characteristic of Hosea's

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1. Hosea, Chapter 1:1
2. Hosea, Chapter 4:1-2; 4:6, 8, 11-13
3. Welch, A. C., Religion of Israel under the Kingdom, p. 105
4. Cheyne, T. K., Cambridge Bible, Vol. Hosea, p. 35

writings.[1]

G. Hosea's Marriage

Melville Scott, in his book Message of Hosea, would change the arrangement of some of the verses in Hosea's prophecy, in order to secure what he considers to be a more logical arrangement of the events in Hosea's life. According to Dr. Scott's arrangement, the following points of Hosea's life constitute the bitter experiences from which he drew his message; Hosea was commanded by the Lord to take unto himself a wife of whoredoms and children of whoredoms;[2] so Hosea married Gomer, the daughter of Diblaim.[3] Various attempts have been made to extract from these names meanings appropriate to the circumstances. For example, Gomer may be interpreted "perfection" (i. e. consummate in wickedness), and Diblaim "cakes of figs" (i. e. the sweetness of sin.) It has been suggested, but the view is not borne out by usage, that Diblaim is the name of Gomer's birthplace, for Diblathaim was a Moabitish town.[4] With reference to the Bible statement that she was a woman of whoredomes,[5] according to Hebrew idiom, this term means "a woman of unchaste disposition," but we must suppose that afterwards Hosea found Gomer to be the character described.[6] Hosea, after selecting as he thought a

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1. Hastings, J., Greater Men and Women of the Bible, Vol. 4, p. 377
2. Hosea, Chapter 1:2
3. Hosea, Chapter 1:3
4. Cheyne, T. K., Cambridge Bible, Vol. Hosea, p. 42; Numbers, Ch. 33:46
5. Hosea, Chapter 1:2
6. Cheyne, T. K., Cambridge Bible, Vol. Hosea, p. 20

bride like the lily of the valley, found that his wife was, instead, a lily torn and trampled in the mire.[1] Hosea must have regarded Gomer as pure when he married her. If she was not chaste, then Hosea was ignorant of her guilt. He hoped the best of her, but she was unworthy of his trust.[2]

H. Birth of Gomer's Children

Gomer, after her marriage with Hosea, bore three children: Jezreel,[3] Lo-ruhamah,[4] and Lo-ammi,[5] none of which, as the prophet later learned, were his own. The names given by Hosea to these children were all of symbolic character, since he had become cognizant of his wife's unfaithfulness. However, his love for Gomer, and his hope of reclaiming her was such that he took no legal steps against her three children.[6] The prophecies of Hosea here reveal the ideal father. There is nothing to indicate what he did with the children that Gomer had borne when he learned that they were the off-spring of adultery. His first impulse would be to send them to their mother, but they seemed to have found a place in his heart from which he could not eject them.[7]

I. Hosea's Treatment of Gomer

Gomer in her guilt fled to her paramour, but even then Hosea's love followed her.[8] She had fallen into the last

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1. Hosea, Chapter 1:8-9
   Cheyne, T. K., Cambridge Bible, Vol. Hosea, p. 17
2. Robinson, T. H., Prophecy and Prophet, p. 101
3. Hosea, Chapter 1:4
4. Hosea, Chapter 1:6
5. Hosea, Chapter 1:9
6. Cheyne, T. K., Cambridge Bible, Vol. Hosea, P. 15
7. Mitchell, H. G., Ethics of the Old Testament, p. 130
8. Cheyne, T. K., Cambridge Bible, Vol. Hosea, p. 15

depths of vileness, had sold herself into slavery.[1] It was from the iron prison of degradation that her desperate appeal had reached Hosea's ears. Then came the day when it was to him as if God spoke, telling him, "Go again, love a woman beloved of a paramour and an adultress.[2] So he bought her out of slavery for the price of silver and grain.[3] Why Hosea had to buy his wife back from her lover does not appear; had he lost his rights over her by flight and adultery? The matter of payment of both silver and grain is explained by Pocoke and Pusey in that Hosea undertook to allow his wife sufficient for a decent maintenance until she should be reinstated in her full condition. But this view does violence to the letter of the text, as there is no sufficient proof of the rendering "I provided her with food."[4]

Gomer needed discipline and help. It was for both purposes that her husband said to her, "Many days shalt thou abide with me. Thou shalt not play the harlot, and thou shalt not be for any husband," and as if to pledge his own fidelity, he adds, "and for my part I will be so towards thee."[5] The relationship of wife was, however, not to be reestablished. This was to last for many days, as long as necessary to assure Hosea of Gomer's moral amendment.[6] Even we hear Hosea calling

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1. Hosea, Chapter 2:5
2. Hosea, Chapter 3:1
3. Houghton, H., Hebrew Life and Thought, p. 196
   Hosea, Chapter 3:2
4. Cheyne, T. K., Cambridge Bible, Vol. Hosea, p. 59
5. Houghton, L. S., Hebrew Thought and Life, p. 196
   Hosea, Chapter 3:3
6. Cheyne, T. K., Cambridge Bible, Vol. Hosea, p. 59

to the children to strive to rescue their mother: "Plead with thy mother, plead."[1] If the children's pleadings move her not nor the threat of punishments, will she not be moved by pity for the little ones? Alas, no! "For their mother played the harlot.[2] Gomer's sin had been against love; and in that lay her hope of restoration. Gomer was to be brought back by the invincible love of her husband, and was, through it, to be restored to her forfeited position.[3] It is to be especially noted that the conclusion of this story is not given us. We do not know if eventually she was restored to full companionship.[4]

J. The Different Interpretations of the Biblical Account of Hosea's Domestic Affairs

It is not surprising that divers interpretations have been put upon this troubled tale of Hosea's married life. A summary of the more important interpretations of the prophet's marriage is here given.

1. The marriage was a vision, a transaction in a dream or trance, and never carried out in real life.

11. The marriage was a parable, or allegory, or figurative mode of speech. In defense of both the above interpretations as against a literal interpretation it is

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1. Hosea, Chapter 2:2
2. Houghton, L. S., Hebrew Thought and Life, p. 193
. Hosea, Chapter 2:5
3. Scott, M., Message of Hosea, p. 33
4. Harper, W. R., I. C. C. Commentary, Amos and Hosea, p. cxlii

urged (a) that to take it literally is a reflexion upon the holiness of God, and imputes to Hosea conduct out of harmony with the character of a prophet; (b) that the woman in chapter 3:1 is not the same as the wife in chapter 1, and that Hosea should have made two such marriages is improbable; (c) that too much time was consumed by these events for Hosea ever to have used them as the basis of a striking appeal to the nation; (d) that the prophets often represent themselves as being under command to do things which could not have been done; (e) that the chief emphasis is on the symbolical names; (f) that it would have been psychologically impossible for a man of Hosea's character to have received such a command from Yahweh.

Against the preceding views, and in favor of a liberal understanding of the narrative, it is urged (a) that what is morally and religiously objectionable in actual practice becomes no more defensible by being presented as vision or parable; (b) that no indication is given by the prophet that this is a vision or a parable; (c) that the name Gomer bath Diblaim yields no symbolic significance; (d) that the literal view suits the realism of early prophecy better than the supposition that it is a product of literary imagination; (e) that a real experience such as this furnishes the best explanation of Hosea's message--it was the outcome of the sufferings of his own heart.

111. Those who have maintained that a real marriage took place have differed widely among themselves: (1) that Gomer was an acknowledged harlot (a) who had already borne children; or (b) who bore children to Hosea in lawful wedlock; or (c) who bore, after her marriage, children whose parentage was uncertain. The interpretation of Umbreit is worthy of mention in this connection, viz. that Hosea, thinking of Yahweh as the husband of Israel, and of himself as Yahweh's representative to Israel, feels that he himself has contracted marriage with a harlot, since he by virtue of his prophetic calling sustains the same relation to Israel as Yahweh does. Against the view that Gomer was a public harlot the objection is urged that it is contrary to the regular custom of Hosea and the prophets in general who always represented Israel as pure at the time of her union with Yahweh. (2) Another phase of this view is that spiritual fornication is meant here, Gomer being a worshiper of idols, like all the Israelites of Hosea's time. (3) Some have held that Gomer the harlot was taken by Hosea only as a concubine. (4) Some hold the view that makes the wife and children virtuous and honorable, but say that Hosea called his wife adulterous for parabolic purposes. (5) Finally, it is held that the disposition toward adultery in Gomer did not manifest itself until after her marriage. The advantages of this view are:(a) that it accepts the narrative as being the recital of historical facts, while at the same time, it does away with the moral difficulties involved in other views; (b) that it furnishes a

reasonable basis for Hosea's evident love for his wife; (c) that it most easily explains processes through which Hosea came to a realization of a mutual relationship of Yahweh and Israel; (d) that it is supported by chapter 3, which describes Hosea as taking back his wife who had been dismissed on account of her adultery, which dismissal would have been justifiable if Hosea had married her with full knowledge of her having been previously immoral. The objections that have been made to it are: (a) the fact that it necessitates the supposition that Hosea, after an experience of many years, looked back upon it all and interpreted as Yahweh's call what was in a large measure due to his own natural impulses; (b) the fact that to take out of Hosea's life the years necessary for the events narrated here leaves comparatively little of his life to be spent in prophetic activity; (c) that the fact that the wife's infidelity did not develop until after the marriage would have been too important an item to have been completely ignored in the text; (d) it is no easier to think of Yahweh as commanding Hosea to marry a woman whom Yahweh knows to be about to break her marriage vows than to think of him as commanding Hosea to marry a harlot; (e) the purpose of the marriage does not appear on this supposition; it was not necessary to teach Hosea the idea of Yahweh as Israel's husband, for this was a common Semitic conception.[1]

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1. Harper, W. R., International Critical Commentary, Amos and Hosea, p. 208-210

The writer of this paper, through systematic and careful study of the facts at hand, is led to believe that the prophet Hosea underwent a real experience such as he described. In the first place, it is very unlikely that a man should have invented such a story about his wife, or if he was unmarried, about himself. But he says expressly that his domestic experience was the beginning of Yahweh's word to him. That is, he passed through it first, and only afterwards, through the sympathy and insight thus acquired, did he come to appreciate Yahweh's relation to Israel. Finally, the style betrays narrative rather than parable. Further, the writer believes that Hosea was unaware of Gomer's guilt until after the marriage. Had not Hosea's wife been pure when he married her, she could not have served as a type of the Israel whose early relations to Jehovah he describes as innocent. This is confirmed also by the high marriage ideas of the prophet. 'The struggle of Hosea's shame and grief when he found his wife unfaithful is altogether inconceivable unless his first love had been pure and full of trust in the purity of its object.'[1]

In order to reconcile with this the statement of that command to take a wife of the character described, we must refer to the interpretation of W. R. Smith, "When, some years after his marriage, Hosea began to be aware of the

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1. Smith, G. A., The Book of the Twelve Prophets, p. 238

character of his wife, and while he still brooded upon it, God revealed to him why He who knoweth all things from the beginning had suffered His servant to marry such a woman; and Hosea by very natural anticipation, pushed back his own knowledge of God's purpose to the date when that purpose was actually to be fulfilled, the day of his betrothal. This, though he was unconscious of his fatal future, had been to Hosea the beginning of the word of the Lord."

How long Hosea took to discover his shame he indicates by a few hints which he suffers to break from the delicate reserve of his story. He calls the first child his own; and the boy's name, though ominous of the nation's fate, has no trace of shame upon it. Hosea does not claim the second child;[1] and in the name of this child, Lo-Ruhamah, she hath not been loved (compassioned), orphan not be death but by her mother's sin, we find proof of the prophet's awakening to the tragedy of his home. Nor does he own the third child, Not-my-people. The three births must have taken at least six years; one or more times Hosea had forgiven the woman, and until the sixth year she stayed in his house. Then either he put her from him, or she went her own way.

K. Effect of Hosea's Domestic Experiences upon his Spiritual Life

These tragic and domestic experiences caused the

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1. Hosea, Chapter 1:6; compare with Hosea 1:3

prophet untold suffering. Still, it brought him a great spiritual blessing, for through it, he came to know the heart of God as he had not known it before, and thus was admitted to a new intimacy and richness of fellowship with the Divine. As he later looked upon his sufferings, it seemed clear to him that the hand of God had been in them all; that even his marriage with an impure woman had been commanded by God; and that all things had been working together for the good.[1]

III. Hosea's Life Interpreted in Terms of the Nation

We know that this series of domestic events were viewed by Hosea himself as interpretative of God's purposes for him, and as conveying to him a clearly defined mission.[2] He used his own tragic domestic experience as a basis for impassionate appeals to the house of Israel to forsake its whoredoms and return to its allegiance to Jehovah, the loving husband and Father of the Chosen Race.[3] The principal contribution of the domestic experience of Hosea was not the message concerning the destruction of Israel, but that concerning the great love of Yahweh in spite of faithlessness.[4] Licentious extravagance, the frequent idolatry, the entangling foreign alliances of his people were to Hosea akin to treachery wherewith the wife of his bosom rewarded his faithful

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1. Knudson, A. C., Beacon Lights of Prophecy, p. 101
2. Cheyne, T. K., Cambridge Bible, Vol. Hosea, p. 18
3. Powell, J. W., In the Search of God, p. 88
4. Harper, W. R., I. C. C., Amos and Hosea, p. cxliv

devotion. With heartbroken tenderness he pictured God as a devoted husband, whose love might still redeem the unfaithful Spouse, but who nevertheless, must stand aside, in helpless pity until the bitter fruits of disloyalty have wrought the spirit of true repentance.[1] What Hosea did was to prove in God so much mercy and love that religion was love as well as law, and love, beheld, was stronger than law.[2]

A. Interpretation of Hosea's Marriage

As Gomer became the wedded wife of the prophet, so the people of Northern Israel had entered into analogous mystical relation to Jehovah.[3] Just as a man by deep instinct of his nature seeks a wife and cleaves unto her, so it was with Yahweh in his relation with Israel. There was a deep ingrained bond of union between them. That union had all the intensity, all the passion, all the delicacy, and all the refinement of feeling which manifested itself in the marriage relation in its purest form. To have fixed upon this thought and to have given it an abiding expression was no small achievement--and this idea we owe to Hosea.[4] Marriage between Hosea and Israel is conceived wholly as a moral relation. Jehovah's bride is not the land but the people, and this figure is used in the narrower sense of Israel, excluding

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1. Powell, J. W., In the Search of God, p. 68
2. Hosea, Chapter 14:4
   Hosea, Chapter 6:5
3. Cheyne, T. K., Cambridge Bible, Vol. Hosea, p. 42
4. Knudson, A. C., Religious Teachings of the Old Testament, p. 181

Judah. Not that He has no connection with the physical fruits of the land: corn, wine, flax, and oil. These represent only signs and ornaments of the marriage gifts from husband to wife. "I will betroth her to me in righteousness and justice, in leal love and tender mercies."[1] The covenant of Sinai was a covenant of marriage.[2]

B. Interpretation of the Names of Gomer's Children

But Israel sinned and departed from God just as Gomer was unfaithful to Hosea. The unethical worship which was practiced by the Hebrews all about him was in Hosea's view as much infidelity to Yahweh as Gomer's life with her lovers was infidelity to her husband.[3] Even the names of Gomer's children may be interpreted in the light of Israel's straying from her God. "And the Lord said unto him, 'Call his name Jezreel; for yet a little while I will avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu, and I will cause the kingdom of Israel to cease. And it shall be in that day I will break the bow of Israel in the valley of Jezreel.[4] This name, Jezreel, is symbolical and refers to the great battle grounds (Ju. 4:13ff, 1 Sam. 29:1ff), on which Jehu had massacred the family of Ahab (2 Kings 9:10). In giving this name to his bastard son, he plainly characterizes Jehu's

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1. Smith, G. A., Twelve Prophets, p. 243
   Hosea, Chapter 2:19
2. Barton, W. R., Religion of Israel, p. 99
3. Cheyne, T. K., Cambridge Bible, Vol. Hosea, p. 42
4. Hosea, Chapter 1:4

act as wicked and ruinous. Another point may be noted: the prophet does not yet know, if we may compare the son's name with that of the daughter, that his wife is faithless to him.[1] At the birth of a second child, a daughter, God instructed the prophet, "Call her name Lo-ruhamah: for I will no more have mercy upon the house of Israel; I will utterly take them away."[2] "Call her name 'No-pity!'" The explanation of this follows, "I will no longer have pity for the house of Israel that I should forgive them." Of the third child God said, "Call his name Lo-ammi: for ye are not my people and I will not be your God." This expressed the complete estrangement existing between Israel and Yahweh, and Yahweh's purpose to leave Israel to its fate.[3]

C. Gomer's Unfaithfulness Interpreted in Terms of Israel's Unfaithfulness to Jehovah

The allegory discovered in the actual events of Gomer's unfaithfulness to the prophet is then developed in terms of Israel's unfaithfulness to Jehovah. The outward condition of Israel is vividly described by the prophet. "For there is no truth nor mercy nor knowledge of God in the land, but perjury and killing and stealing and adultery--Therefore the land mourneth, and all that dwelleth therein languisneth."[4]

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1. Harper, W. R., I. C. C., Amos and Hosea, p. 212
2. Hosea, Chapter 1:6
3. Harper, W. R., I. C. C., Amos and Hosea, p. 213
4. Hosea, Chapter 4:1-3

Moral sanctions have been weakend by an era of prosperity. Materialism has borne its inevitable fruit of universal selfishness. Selfishness has led to violence, robbery, murder. The root of all social evil is to be found in the absence of God's teaching.[1]

"....For with thee is my strife, O Priest." Let no man attempt reform. The priesthood of God has failed to instruct the people in the knowledge of God.[2] "....They changed their glory into shame, set their hearts upon their iniquity. And it shall be, like people like priests. But I will visit his ways upon him." Hosea denounces the priests, but is careful not to depreciate the priesthood. Their sin is a declension from a lofty position, and in the same way the sin of Israel is a declension from a definite relationship with God.[3]

"Whoredom and wine take away the understanding of my people. They have gone a whoring from their God. Upon the top of the mountain do they sacrifice."[4] The decay of religion inevitably leads to superstition, degradation of the sanctuary to voluptuous orgies on the hills and under the trees of the wood.[5] Hosea says that Israel's unfaithfulness is the unfaithfulness of a wife. Another object of affection

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1. Scott, M., Message of Hosea, p. 43
2. Hosea, Chapter 4:6
3. Scott, M., Message of Hosea, p. 44
4. Hosea, Chapter 4:12-13
5. Scott, M., Message of Hosea, p. 45

has been chosen--the wife's preference of another to her rightful Lord.[1] This other is Baal who has usurped the place of Yahweh.[2] Hence, the wrath of Yahweh is jealousy, the most tense of passions. The defection is indeed judged from the ethical standpoint. "Yahweh has an indictment against His people," said Hosea. "There is no kindness and no knowledge of Yahweh in the land; there is naught but the breaking faith and killing and stealing and committing adultery."[3] It is not so much the substitution of something else for obedience, but the choice of Baal as the object of obedience which kindles the wrath of Yahweh. The resulting emotion is represented as jealousy, and Israel's defection as a breach of the marriage vow. Though it was the name of Yahweh that was invoked at the altars, the rites were of Canaanite origin, and exhibited all the sensuous and immoral features of nature worship among the Semitic agricultural people. Since the character and nature of a god are largely determined in the minds of his devotees by the kind of worship offered to him, Hosea was justified in maintaining that in effect the object of Israel's worship was not Yahweh but Baal.[4]

It does not even appear that Hosea was a Monotheist in our sense of the word. The bitterness with which he

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1. Hosea, Chapter 2:5
2. Hosea, Chapter 2:13
3. Hosea, Chapter 4:1-2
4. Pace, Edward, Ideas of God in Israel, p. 183

declaims against the Baals indicates that he had some sort of belief in their existence; his declaration that other lands than Yahweh's are unclean shows that in his view other divinities had power there. Yet the vividness with which Hosea conceived the relation of Yahweh to Israel as a marriage prepared the way for monotheism, for it impressed upon the people the thought that Yahweh tolerates no rival in the affections of His people. Both Jewish and Christian thinkers have given prominent expression to this conception of Hosea.[1]

Although Hosea charged the priests with having forgotten the true Torah of their God, resulting in a debased type of worship, greed, luxury, corruption, frequent acts of oppression, open and shameless violence,[2] yet the circle of condemnation widens to include not only the priests but the court and nation. The whole nation has been ensnared by the wickedness of its leaders in church and state. "....hearken, ye house of Israel....I am the rebuker of the law."[3]

"They will not frame their thoughts to turn unto their God....and they have not known the Lord. Therefore the pride of Israel shall be brought low before His face."[4] The 'pride of Israel' is capable of two interpretations. It may mean Israel's vain-glorious self-confidence which is hateful to Jehovah. No doubt in this case it signifies that Jehovah has spoken a judgment by which Israel has fallen.

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1. Smith, H., Religion of Israel, p. 145
2. Scott, R., Message of Hosea, p. 47; Hosea, Chapter 5:1
3. Hosea, Chapter 5:4-5
4. Cheyne, T. K., Cambridge Bible, Vol. Hosea, p. 72

"....They will go to seek the Lord, but they shall not find Him. He hath withdrawn Himself from them. They have dealt faithlessly against the Lord, for they have brought forth strange children."[1] Dr. Harper has commented much to the point on the word 'dealt faithlessly', which is used of adultery. He states that Hosea is here keeping up the figure of the nation's marriage to Yahweh, and characterizes the syncretism in worship as a breach of the marriage contract. The parents having departed from the true worship of Yahweh, the children have naturally followed, and are consequently strangers to Yahweh, having no place among His children.[2]

In vain did the husband send to the shameful mother her children: Jezreel, whose name announced judgment; Lo-ruhamah, whose name signified uncompassion; and Lo-ammi, the name meaning the treatment of Israel as a foreign nation.[3] Yahweh is represented as addressing the individual Israelites. The restored children seem to represent the better elements of the nation. The mother with whom they are to strive is the nation Israel as a whole. The influence of the children and their appeal to their mother had doubtless been a means by which Hosea had attempted to bring back his wife. Israel as a nation is warned of the consequences of her infidelity, in

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1. Hosea, Chapter 5:6-7
2. Harper, W. R., I. C. C., Amos and Hosea, p. 271
3. Hosea, Chapter 2:2

the very terms in which Hosea had appealed to Gomer, warning her not merely of the loss which she would sustain by treachery to her home, but of the disgrace that she would bring upon her children, who would be regarded as the children of whoredom. No stronger plea could be made to a mother than that by her children.[1]

But Israel remains estranged from her husband, Yahweh. The harlotry with which Israel is charged is, to a large extent, spiritual, not physical (except so far as the religious prostitution might be involved as in Amos 2:7).

During this period of Israel's weakness, the sanctuaries were crowded with ardent worshipers who multiplied their sacrifices and rioted at the sacrificial feasts. But all this zeal in the performance of religious rites co-existed with wide-spread and deeply social wickedness. The picture painted for us by both Hosea and Amos is of a society rotten in all of its members, wherein the plainest moral laws are openly violated. Yet religion is fashionable and worship maintained on a large lavish scale. These conditions, social and religious, determined the form of the prophet's message.[2]

What engrossed all of Hosea's thoughts was the historical religion which had made his nation what it was, which had made it different from all other nations among which

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1. Scott, R., Message of Hosea, p. 35
2. Pace, Edward, Ideas of God in Israel, p. 161

it had lived, and the loss of which would mean the loss of a great thing from the world. He did not speak of a God who was Lord of heaven and earth, but of One who had come into contact with His people, who revealed Himself through the deed which had made the nation's history, and through the institutions which moulded its life. He believed that in a unique way Israel knew Yahweh, and that this knowledge was in itself the proof of His love for it.[1]

Of what now has Israel been guilty, having forsaken Jehovah her husband? Not of worshiping the Baalim as gods who existed in opposition to Yahweh, but rather as having put Yahweh in place of Baalim, and having retained as an essential element of the Yahweh worship the rite formally carried on as a part of the cultus of the Baalim.

It seems wise at this point to inject a brief statement of the Canaanitic system of worship and practices, with which Yahweh worship was becoming confused. A local Canaanite community recognizes an invisible head, with whom it meets at the sacred spot, whom it regards as overlord or master, and whom it serves with sacrifices and with lively manifestations of joy at certain fixed periods. The god is called Baal, a title meaning lord or master. At the shrines of Baal the apparatus is of a very simple nature. An upright stone represents the god; it is not a statue of him but a

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1. Welch, A. C., The Religion of Israel under the Kingdom, p. 111

place to which he is supposed to come when meeting with his worshipers. In the earliest time of Semitic religions this stone served as an altar. Another piece of furniture of the Canaanite shrine is a massive tree trunk, representing the female deity, Ashera, who is the invariable companion of the Baal. The canaanite worship is the worship of an agricultural community; Baal is the lord of the soil and the author of its fertility, who is entitled to receive the first fruits; the Ashera is the fertile matron who represents the principle of increase. The festivals were those of the farmers' calendar; at a general feasting and merrymaking the Baal is presented with the first fruits, while his consort is served with rites applying in the most direct manner the principle she represents.[1]

To the Israelites the worship of Canaan proved a great temptation. In the opinion of Hosea, Israel has worshiped Yahweh as a source of material blessings, but the nation has corrupted His worship with much that pertains to the worship of Baalim.[2] Israel has worshiped Yahweh at the sanctuaries of the local Baals (the "lovers" in chapter 2:5), the supposed givers of land fertility, and therefore according to the Canaanite cult. Hosea's protest confirms Israel's idea of God; the erroneous idea of Jehovah who seeks the moral qualities (chapter 2:19) is allegorized into actual

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1. Menzies, Allan, History of Religion, p. 165-167
2. Harper, W. R., I. C. C., Amos and Hosea, p. 228

abandonment of Him.[1]

The blessings which Israel had received at the hand of Jehovah were falsely ascribed by her to be from the Baalim. As long as this bounty was enjoyed, Israel felt as much pledged by it to her false gods as the harlot is bound by her hire to her paramour. At every recurring season of harvest, Israel gratefully connected these blessings with her supposed protectors, and offered fruits to them, or Hosea put it, she has loved a harlot's hire.[2] Observe that Hosea finds fault with the Israelites, not for a neglect of a centralizing ordinance, but for honoring the Baalim in preference to the true spiritual God.[3]

"I will visit upon her the days of Baalim."[4] To visit is to examine or take notice of, whether in a favorable sense or the reverse. Hosea has referred to the Holy Days of Jehovah; now he complains of the holy days of Baalim which, there is reason to think are in name at least, the same holy days as those of the more spiritual worshipers of Jehovah (new moons, sabbaths, and festal assemblies),[5] but different from these in total absence of a spiritual element. They are in fact nothing better than sensual merrymakings and a display of finery such as the heathen loved at the turning

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1. Robinson, H. W., Abingdon Commentary, p. 702
2. Isaiah, Chapter 2:5
3. Cheyne, T. K., Cambridge Bible, Vol. Hosea, p. 52
4. Hosea, Chapter 3:13
5. Hosea, Chapter, 2:11

points of the agricultural year.

What does Hosea mean by the Baalim? Certainly not, as some have supposed, statues of a god distinct from Jehovah called Baal. This view is opposed by chapter 2:19. The prophet means by the Baalim the varities of the national deity, especially worshiped in different Israelitish localities, such as Baal-hamon and Baal-hazor.[1] The Israelites of the North looked upon the Baalim as the givers of their bread and their water, their oil, and their drinks; in short, in no essential respect different from the heathen Baalim of the Canaanites. This was no doubt backsliding from the spiritual truths. But it can be accounted for; it is not to be traced to a peculiar wickedness of the primitive Israelites, but a fusion of Israelitish religion with a religion founded by them in Canaan was inevitable, partly because of the common usage of the term Baal for a deity, and partly because of the essential custom to learn "the manner of the god of the land," since national prosperity seemed to depend on the favor of the territorial deities.[2] A study of an ancient Carthaginian law reveals the fact that the main sacrifice bore the same names among the Hebrew and Canaanite descendants. We find the "whole burnt offering," and "peace-offering," and the "meal-offering."[3]

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1. Cheyne, T. K., Cambridge Bible, Vol. Hosea, p. 52
2. Ibid p. 53
3. Barton, George A., Archaeology and the Bible, p. 243, Corpus Inscriptionum Semiticarum 1, number 165

Hosea agreed that the practice of agriculture had involved unfaithfulness from Yahweh. He represents Israel as going after her lovers--that is, the Baalim, to whom she attributed the corn, the wine, and oil. Evidence of Israel's Baal worship has been found in the mound of Taanach Sellin where an incense altar of terra cotta has been discovered. On one side of it was the figure of a palm-tree. Part of an Ashtoreth figure and fragments of another altar were found near. Sellin thought that the building containing these was a private house, and if so, we have in these objects some of the implements of private worship employed by the Israelites. Ashtoreth-plaques have been found which were presented as votive offerings, and which were all designed to foster in the worshiper a type of debasing service. Archaeology has here revealed to us in the most vivid way the tremendous power of those corrupting religious influences which the Hebrew prophets so vigorously denounced.[1]

The prophet can see no cure for the evils except by a return to the desert, which would interrupt her pursuit of the agricultural life and thus break off her connection with Baalim.[2] "Therefore will I take away my corn....and my wine.... and recover my flax and wool." By withdrawing the gifts hitherto put to wrong uses and ascribed to wrong sources,

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1. Barton, G. A., Archaeology and the Bible, p. 172-173
2. Peake, A. S., Brotherhood in the Old Testament, p. 25
   Hosea, Chapter 2:9

Yahweh would both chastise Israel and teach her to recognize him as the bestower of these blessings.[1]

Then follows the announcement of God's three methods in which He successively deals with Israel: disillusion, despoilation, and stern discipline, (according to Dr. Scott). Each section of these three methods begins with the same emphatic "Wherefore," since in every case the punishment has been necessitated by sin. Israel has gone after her lovers, the idol deities, for the supposed advantages to be gained from them. Thence her punishment is disillusion. She will find her way hedged up; she will not receive the benefit she expected.[2] Then will she contrast her position with the plenty that she had enjoyed in former days.[3] Dr. Harper speaks of this passage as describing the return of Israel,[4] but Dr. Scott terms it only remorse; Israel only contemplates a return.

The second method by which Jehovah deals with erring Israel is marked by increased severity. Disillusion is followed by despoilation. Because Israel did not recognize her prosperity, she must learn that the Lord gave by finding that the Lord hath taken away. All the prosperity of agriculture which she had attributed to the Baalim, and for

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1. Harper, W. R., I. C. C., Amos and Hosea, p. 231
2. Hosea, Chapter 2:6
3. Scott, R., The Message of Hosea, p. 36
4. Harper, W. R., I. C. C., Amos and Hosea, p. 236

which she had returned thanks in sabbaths and festivals; all the richness of her vineyards which had furnished idolatrous libations should be layed waste. The festal days of the Baalim which had taken of the prescribed worship should be visited upon Israel.[1] What they had done was to cause the real character of Yahweh to be forgotten. "She went after her lovers, and she forgat me, saith the Lord."[2] The nature of their Yahweh worship was such as to give them a false idea of Yahweh's character; under His name they were virtually doing homage to the Baalim.[3]

"They have spoken words, swearing falsely in making a covenant."[4] The covenants spoken of are those entered into with Assyria and Egypt. Rather than place dependence in a loving God, they associated themselves with foreign countries and had broken their covenant~~s~~, as here maintained by the prophet.[5] Alliances with foreign nations have sapped Israel's strength, rather than brought her permanent help. No longer wholly devoted to Yahweh, she is half hearted in His services, "a cake not turned."[6] Their humiliations have not had the result of bringing them back to God, but have only made them more eager after the alliances with Egypt and Assyria. "Even as they go I will spread my net upon

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1. Hosea, Chapter 2:15,17
2. Harper, W. R., I. C. C., Amos and Hosea, p. 271; Hosea, Ch. 8:7
3. Harper, W. R., I. C. C., Amos and Hosea, P. 234
4. Hosea, Chapter 10:4
5. Scott, M., Message of Hosea, p. 35
6. Hosea, Chapter 7:8

them....I will destroy them as their congregation have heard." The verse seems to refer to prophetic warnings of their coming doom.[1]

Hosea tried to impress the fact that merely political remedies--alliances and embassies--shall be of no avail to remove moral defilement. The real enemy to be feared is God who will rush like a lion on His prey.[2] The fact that the inward corruption of a nation is more dangerous to its existence than external enemies is a part of Hosea's message of which we are learning today the modern application.[3] "Behold, I am going to hedge up her way with thorns."[4] The thorn hedge and wall represent circumstances and events which render continued action of any kind impracticable on the part of Israel, "some dark calamity utterly paralyzing the vital powers." The blessings she counted on as coming from the Baalim will fail her. Just as Gomer said when separated from her lovers by impassable barriers, "Let me go and return unto my former husband, for it was better with me then than now,"[5] so is Israel likewise represented.

"In their affliction they will seek me, come let us return unto the Lord."[6] The prophet represents Jehweh

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1. Scott, M., Message of Hosea, p. 34
2. Hosea, Chapter 13:8
3. Scott, M., Message of Hosea, p. 49
4. Hosea, Chapter 2:6
5. Hosea, Chapter 2:7
6. Hosea, " " 5:15

as waiting for Israel to come back, and Israel as in fact coming back, but with a false conception of Yahweh, and with an idea of repentance so false and so inadequate as to make the action a farce.[1]

But Israel's false repentance was sorrowfully rejected. Yahweh's soliloquy reveals the perplexity of love in dealing with sin. He questions the possibility of accepting so insubstantial a repentance. "For your goodness is as the morning cloud and as the dew that passeth early away.... For I desire mercy and not sacrifice."[2] The message of the prophets was intended to effect a deeper repentance issuing in a moral and spiritual reformation. God demands reality, and will not be satisfied by empty professions or by outward offerings.[3] These are not a substitute for a sincere intention to observe the terms of the covenant. A striking parallel occurs in a saying ascribed to Budda, who, however, unlike our Lord, denounced animal sacrifices as in themselves wrong: "If any man lives a hundred years and engages the whole of his time and attention in religious offerings to the gods, sacrificing elephants and horses, and other life, all this is not equal to one act of pure love in saving life."[4]

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1. Harper, W. R., I. C. C., Amos and Hosea, p. 281
   Hosea, Chapter 5:6, 6:3
2. Hosea, Chapter 6:4, 6
3. Scott, M., Message of Hosea, p. 51
4. Cheyne, T. K., Cambridge Bible, Vol. Hosea, p. 79

Because Israel has forgotten, Israel must be reminded. This is to take place by the means of a third method by which God deals with Israel--this is to take place through the stern discipline of exile. Severed from idolatry, Israel will have opportunity to listen to the voice of Yahweh.[1] Dr. Harper states concerning this passage, "Israel is kindly and gently separated from her lovers, and as in the coming out of Egypt, is guided to the wilderness for discipline; after this her possessions will be given back to her, and she will again be fresh and strong as in the days of her youth."[2] However, exile can hardly be described as a kind and gentle process, being the culmination of all Israel's punishment, yet exile in this case purposes mercy.

"I will allure her."[3] "Allure her" seems out of place in introducing punishment, but the purpose is to use kind and gentle means to bring back erring Israel. Keil thinks that Israel is to be led into the wilderness not for punishment but for the deliverance from bondage. By "wilderness" Hosea means not merely the desert which lay between Canaan and the land of captivity, but the captivity or exile itself. The sojourn in a heathen land appeared to Pious Israelites like a wandering in the desert.[4]

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1. Scott, R., Message of Hosea, p. 36
2. Harper, W. R., I. C. C., Amos and Hosea, p. 232
3. Hosea, Chapter 2:14
4. Cheyne, T. K., Cambridge Bible, Vol. Hosea, P. 53

The metaphor which Hosea uttered came from his heart, with its pure, yearning, unsatisfied affection. God's words to Israel are like a love song:

"Therefore, Lo! I will allure her,
And will lead her to the desert, and will speak to her heart;
....And she shall respond to me there as in the days of her youth,

....And I will betroth her to me in love and compassion,
And I will betroth her to me in truth and knowledge of Jehovah."[1]

The statement, "Without a king and without a prince"[2] refers to the abolition of kings and princes in Israel. In the case of Gomer this statement corresponds to the denial of intercourse with her lovers. The term "prince" is used partly of the magistrates of the state in general, partly of the elders or heads of families, who played such an important part in the Israelitish community.[3] In emphasizing Yahweh's forgiving spirit and tender love towards Israel, the wife of his youth, Hosea strengthens materially this conception of the indestructible relation

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1. Cadbury, H.J., National Ideals of the Old Testament, p. 115
   Hosea, Chapter 2:19, 20
2. Hosea, Chapter 2:14
3. Cheyne, T. K., Cambridge Bible, Vol. Hosea, p. 60

of Yahweh and his people, giving it also an ethical quality. After the removal of its sins, the purified people will finally be restored to a better kingdom, which is a realization of a conception of the rule of Yahweh Himself, of a national organization of Israel under Yahweh, made effective through the rulers reigning by commission or unction from Him.[1]

In the nomadic life Israel would learn that it was not the Baalim but Yahweh who blessed the labor of her hands and gave the fertility of her soil.

The vineyards of the wilderness, i. e., vineyards where there were no vineyards represent the sweet uses of adversity, and the reference to the valley of Achor means the door or pathway to hope.[2] Gomer is a symbol of a faithless, but not forgotten Israel.

"And I will make for them a covenant in that day.... and I will betroth thee unto me forever....And thou shalt know the Lord."[3] Again shall Israel be betrothed to Yahweh, this time in loving kindness, mercy and faithfulness; and at last Israel shall really know Yahweh.[4] This important section is of singular beauty. It sets forth the covenant position as dating from the very infancy of the nation. The sin of Israel consists in ignoring this hallowed relationship,

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1. Peters, J. P., Religion of the Hebrews, p. 431
2. Scott, R., Message of Hosea, p. 37
   Hosea, Chapter 2:15
3. Hosea, Chapter 2:20
4. Harper, W. R., International Critical Commentary, Amos and Hosea, p. 241

and punishment as a form of exile results. But the covenant is not at an end. On all human principles of justice this would be the case; but Yahweh is "God and not man." In an intense passage Hosea depicts the conflict of emotions in the heart of God.[1] "And it shall come to pass in that day I will marry saith the Lord....I will say thou art my people." Marriage with Israel brings with it every kind of marriage blessing and becomes the first link in a chain of blessings from God. All of the sin of the past shall be wiped away and forgotten, and the restored adulteress shall be welcomed as a stainless bride. Thus represented in the acts of Hosea, that exhaustless mercy of the Most High breaks forth, which no sin of man can bar back nor wear out. Thus the idea of marriage attains its consummation.[2] Hosea's great prophecy follows in a logical order from sin to punishment, from punishment to repentance, from repentance to restoration, from restoration to the fruitage of the Beatific Vision which is the marriage of God with His bride.[3] All the previous sentences of condemnation are not really reversed, but actually become titles of blessings--Jezreel (the place of sowing) shall reap a better harvest, "Not my people" shall become "My people" and ye shall cry, "My God."[4]

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1. Scott, M., Message of Hosea, p. 65
2. Scott, M., The Message of Hosea, p. 68
3. Ibid p.39
4. Hosea, Chapter 2:23

A new ordinance is established that beasts and men shall do Israel no harm.[1] In the future time Israel's numbers will be beyond calculation; instead of estrangement from Yahweh her people will be recognized as sons of the living God, and instead of schism between the north and the south, there will be united action resulting in victory over all opposers.[2]

The text of Hosea as it now stands contains glowing pictures of the prosperity and glory in store for Israel after her punishment is passed.[3] According to Dr. J. P. Smith, these passages are in all probability the product of later authors. Hosea looked for exile to bring Israel to its right mind and to prepare the way for a return to the homeland; the story of the marriage presupposes the thought of restoration after the period of discipline. But Hosea, Dr. Smith continues, was not concerned to picture restored Israel in such materialistic prosperity as the picture of the future in the book now presents. If the text of the book is now arranged approximately in keeping with the order in which it was spoken by Hosea, it is of interest to see that Hosea's last message pleads with Israel to turn her back upon the sins of the past and to seek earnestly the

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1. Hosea, Chapter 2:18
2. Harper, W. R., International Critical Commentary, Amos and Hosea, p. 245
   Hosea, Chapter 14:6
3. Hosea, Chapters 1:10-12, 14:4-8, 3:5

forgiveness of Yahweh: "Turn O Israel unto Yahweh your God. Say unto Him, "Pardon all our guilt." Nor will we say to the works of our hands, "Our God."[1]

The Messianic views of Hosea are not very vivid, but they represent certain features common to all prophecy down to the close. All the prophets believe in a final restoration of the ideal kingdom, or the theocratic republic, with either Yahweh himself as ruler, or else a human representative commissioned or annointed by him. Each connects this final restoration which is but the ideal fulfillment of the ancient government, with the removal of the sins of his own age as a prerequisite; and also with the accomplishment of such a work of judgment upon the sinners within the nation and the heathen without as lies within his own horizon of vision.[2]

IV. Interpretation of the Symbols used by Hosea

It is most interesting and important for our study to note the frequent use which the prophet Hosea makes of symbols: many examples from nature are used, such as plants, flowers, and the elements; animal symbols, such as the lamb and the lion; human relationships, such as husband and father, are used to portray God. Symbolism,

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1. Smith, J. P., Prophets and Their Times, p. 64
   Hosea, Chapter 14:1-3
2. Peters, J. P., Religion of the Hebrews, p. 482

no doubt, appealed to the minds of the people of Hosea's time and clarified his message to them because his examples are so familiar and commonplace. However, it is often quite necessary for us to give careful study to these comparisons which Hosea used in order to get their deeper meaning.

A. Animal Symbols

Evidence of domestic animals of ancient Palestine may be traced in part by their bones found in various excavations, and in part by the pictures of them drawn in caves and tombs. The domestic animals most often mentioned in the Bible are asses, cattle, sheep, goats and camels. Bones, pictures or models of these were found in the strata of Gezer. Besides using for examples these animals, Hosea draws comparisons from possibly less familiar, or at least less frequently mentioned ones.[1]

Early mention is made of the heifer.[2] "For Israel slideth back as a back-sliding heifer." Like a stubborn heifer, Israel acts stubbornly. This stubborn rebelliousness is seen in Israel's unwillingness to follow the leadings of her Master Yahweh.[3] Again, "And Ephraim is as an heifer that is taught and loveth to tread out the

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1. Barton, George A., Archaeology and the Bible, p. 138
2. Hosea, Chapter 4:16
3. Harper, W. R., International Critical Commentary, Amos and Hosea, p. 264
~~Hosea, Chapter 10:11~~

corn."[1] Israel, in her past history, is compared to a young heifer to whom is assigned the easy task of walking round and round the threshing-floor, an occupation that carries with it the privilege of eating freely, for no muzzle was allowed.[2]

In close connection with the above symbol is the comparison of Israel to a lamb, "Now the Lord will feed them as a lamb in a large place."[3] The connection of this with the reference in the preceding paragraph is this: Israel being a stubborn heifer, how can she expect to be shepherded like a lamb? The "broad place" indicates plenty and prosperity.[4]

Then as God issues judgment against erring Israel, and predicts destruction, Hosea compares God to a young lion--"For I will be unto Ephraim as a lion and like a young lion to the house of Israel."[5] This is the strongest metaphor describing Yahweh. The affliction of Israel is divinely ordained, hence the appeal to human need is of no avail.[6] Again, farther on in the prophecy, the figure of a lion is used. "I will be unto them as a lion."[7] Because Israel had forgotten Yahweh in the pride of her heart, He

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1. Hosea, Chapter 10:11
2. Harper, W. R., International Critical Commentary, Amos and Hosea, p. 353
3. Hosea, Chapter 4:16
4. Harper, W. R., International Critical Commentary, Amos and Hosea, p. 264
5. Hosea, Chapter 5:14
6. Harper, W. R., International Critical Commentary, Amos and Hosea, p. 264
7. Hosea, Chapter 13:7

will treat them as a lion treats his prey.[1] The next verse interprets God's attitude and action silimarly, "I will devour them like a lion."[2] "He shall roar like a lion, ...then the children shall tremble from the west."[3] The roar, like that of a lion calling its young together, is the summons of Yahweh to the scattered people to return. The return is one of the most significant and common elements in the prophet's description of the glorious future.[4] An emphatic fact is that Yahweh himself will send the summons.[5]

"As a leopard by the way will I observe them,"[6] Yahweh here is represented as concealed on the way, ready to jump or leap upon the passing traveller.[7] A similar figure of ferocity is in the following, "I will fall upon them like a bear robbed of its young."[8]

Israel is blind to the fact that she is losing herself among the nations. Turning from God in her arrogance, she is like a silly dove turning hither and thither, only to be caught in a net.[9] The dove, celebrated in proverbs for its simplicity and unsuspicious nature,

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1. Harper, W. R., International Critical Commentary, Amos and Hosea, p. 368
2. Hosea, Chapter 13:8
3. Hosea, Chapter 11:10
4. Isaiah, Chapter 11:11-12; Amos 9:14; Micah 7:12
5. Harper, W. R., International Critical Commentary, Amos and Hosea, p. 371
6. Hosea, 13:7
7. Harper, W. R., International Critical Commentary, Amos and Hosea, p. 308
8. Hosea, Chapter 13:8
9. Hosea, Chapter 7:11

flies thoughtlessly from one danger, that of the pursuing hawk, to another, the fowler's net; or having been in search of food and having lost its home, flutters hither and thither without purpose or plan.[1] Another similar phrase of destruction is, "Like the birds of the air, I will bring them down."[2] Yahweh will bring them down by bait which allures them, or be missile weapons.[3]

But the days of visitation will come, days of bitter experience and dire punishment, and God will cause all their earthly prosperity to take wings because, we have heard already, "they have exchanged their true glory for infamy."[4] Dr. Harper states that with the significance of the bird's flight will Ephraim's glory depart; this is to contrast its former fruitfulness with the coming calamity which consists in the lack of everything which made up Ephraim's glory: prosperity, honor among the nations, and as a prominent element, children. There shall be no more birth, no more motherhood, no more conception. This is the greatest possible curse, the punishment threatened for the lack of chastity. Women will not conceive; if they do, the child will die in the womb; if it should survive

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1. Harper, W. R., International Critical Commentary, Amos and Hosea, p. 303
   Harper, W. R., International Critical Commentary, Amos and Hosea, p. 304
2. Hosea, Chapter 7:12
3. Harper, W. R., International Critical Commentary, Amos and Hosea, p. 304
4. Cheyne, T. K., Cambridge Bible, Vol. Hosea, p. 98
   Hosea, Chapter 9:11

the embryonic period, it will die at birth.[1]

Israel's sinning against God causes him to have Assyria attack her. Hosea compares the swiftness of Assyria to that of an eagle, with which swiftness it will come upon Israel for destruction.[2]

Israel's previous going up to Assyria for the purpose of securing her assistance, and the marked dependence upon a foreign power is cited as an act of faithlessness and guilt. The prophet gives the impression that God looks upon Israel for this sin as a wild ass.[3] The wild ass usually moves in droves, but this representation of the solitariness is figurative of both wilfulness and a love of independence.[4] Again, we find the prophet giving Yahweh's conception of Israel as regards this sin as a wild ass that leaves its herd to find its mate.[5]

Contributing to Israel's final destruction, is the destruction within. "Therefore will I be to Ephraim as a moth."[6] Because of Israel's sin, Yahweh permitted a gradual inward corruption which destroyed the Israelitish states quite as effectually as a foreign conquest. Anarchy

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1. Harper, W. R., International Critical Commentary, Amos and Hosea, p. 337
   Hosea, Chapter 4:10
2. Harper, W. R., International Critical Commentary, Amos and Hosea, p. 308
   Hosea, Chapter 8:1
3. Hosea, 8:9
4. Harper, W. R., International Critical Commentary, Amos and Hosea, p. 318
5. Scott, R., Message of Hosea, p. 57
6. Hosea, Chapter 5:12

and civil war combined with a retrograde religion and a lax of morality were instrumental in bringing Northern Israel to the verge of ruin. The pronoun is emphatic, designating Yahweh as the author of the approaching calamity.[1]

"Thy calf, O Samaria, has cast thee off; mine anger is kindled against them."[2] This stanza is an appeal to Israel to cast away their idolatry. "Calf" is diminutive and sarcastic for bull; these representations of Yahweh were placed in various parts of the country.[3] Israel was not worshiping God but the work of the craftsmen.[4]

B. Nature Symbols

When Israel feigns repentance she soliloquizes on the certainty of finding him. "His going forth is prepared as the morning, and He shall come unto us as the rain."[5] At the sight of Israel's many sins, Yahweh speaks in tones of despair, "What can I make of you, for your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away."[6] That is interpreted, "Your love for God, your goodness, your piety is fleeting, transient. The morning clouds disappear very early in the morning during

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1. Cheyne, T. K., Cambridge Bible, Vol. Hosea, p. 75
2. Hosea, Chapter 8:5
3. Harper, W. R., International Critical Commentary, Amos and Hosea, p. 317
4. Scott, M., Message of Hosea, p. 56
5. Hosea, Chapter 6:3
6. Hosea, Chapter 6:4, Chapter 13:3

the hot season in Palestine, while the dew of Palestine is very heavy in the summer time and resembles a fine rain or Scotch mist rather than the phenomenon so familiar to us. It is thus of the greatest importance for vegetation during the long dry season, and is a favorite illustration with Old Testament writers.[1] We find that dew is later used as a figure of beneficence and kindness.[2] It is employed in this case as the night mist or vapor which comes with the west wind to counteract the evil effect wrought by the east wind.[3] The east wind in another chapter[4] represents Assyria. It is Yahweh's wind because Yahweh executes the judgment pronounced and Assyria is only the instrument. The east wind coming over the desert is both violent and scorching.[5] Hosea portrays Israel in her sins after forsaking God as feeding upon wind, and following after the east wind.[6] Mention again is made of the deadly east wind which in its course destroys everything it touches.[7] "For they have sown wind, and

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1. Harper, W. R., International Critical Commentary, Amos and Hosea, p. 235
2. Hosea, Chapter 14:5
3. Harper, W. R., International Critical Commentary, Amos and Hosea, p. 413
4. Hosea, Chapter 13:15
5. Harper, W. R., International Critical Commentary, Amos and Hosea, p. 406
6. Hosea, Chapter 12:1
7. Harper, W. R., International Critical Commentary, Amos and Hosea, p. 377

have reaped the whirl wind.[1] Further statement and explanation of the coming destruction "wind" represents the nothingness, and utter failure, of their present policy; but the outcome is still more serious, while the whirlwind represents destructiveness.[2]

"A seed which has no stalk and which yields no grain."[3]

The prophet depicts Israel as being "chaff" in the sight of Yahweh because of her guilt and unfaithfulness. "Like chaff on a threshing floor which is easily seized by the wind, like smoke"[4] which escapes through the window, so the people sacrificing to demons and kissing calves shall become nothing, just like the chaff and the smoke.[5]

Yahweh speaks of the satisfaction and pleasure with which He found Israel, "like grapes in the wilderness; like the first fruits on a fig tree."[6] One does not expect grapes in the wilderness. Ripe figs, on account of lateness of the fig harvest in Palestine, were always a great delicacy. Thus was Israel favorably regarded by Jehovah from the very beginning of its history.[7]

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1. Hosea, Chapter 8:7
2. Harper, W. R., International Critical Commentary, Amos and Hosea, p. 317
3. Hosea, Chapter 8:7
4. Hosea, Chapter 13:4
5. Harper, W. R., International Critical Commentary, Amos and Hosea, p. 397
6. Hosea, Chapter 9:10
7. Harper, W. R., International Critical Commentary, Amos and Hosea, p. 336

In using grapes and figs as figures of comparison, Hosea was again using familiar material. Wide mention is made of these fruits in the Bible, and in the course of excavation of Gezer dried figs, grapes, pomegranates and olives were found. Of these fruits those which left the most archaeological evidence of their existence are the grape and the olive.[1]

Israel is likened unto an empty vine.[2] At one time luxuriant and fruitful, it has degenerated because of Yahweh's indignation of Israel's unfaithfulness to Him. It has become practically a useless vine, growing leaves but not any fruit.[3]

Hosea portrays Yahweh as pouring out His wrath upon Israel like waters.[4] Dr. Cheyne states that Jehovah's wrath is like fire in its destructiveness, and like a swollen stream in its abundant volume.[5]

The prophet Hosea portrays God's kindness toward Israel by saying, "He shall grow as the lily and cast forth his roots as in Lebanon. His branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as an olive tree....They shall revive

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1. Barton, George A., Archaeology and the Bible, p. 137
2. Hosea, Chapter 10:1
3. Harper, W. R., International Critical Commentary, Amos and Hosea, p. 343
4. Hosea, Chapter 5:11
5. Cheyne, T. K., Cambridge Bible, Vol. Hosea, p. 75 Hosea 5:11

as the corn and grow like a vine."[1] This passage is contained in Hosea's latter words of hope to Israel. The figure lily suggests beauty, fruitfulness; the sumbol olive tree suggests beauty and something of the greatest value.[2]

Hosea compares Jehovah to a green fir tree. Dr. Cheyne asserts that it is very alien to the spirit of the prophets to compare Jehovah to an evergreen tree. Kiel interprets this passage to mean "the tree of life."[3]

C. Human Symbols of God

In Hosea's prophecy we find Yahweh represented by the prophet in human forms and assuming human relationship. Most outstanding of these human relationships and the one most frequently used was that of husband to the Israelitish race. This was a new interpretation of God's relationship to His people and it revealed new qualities in His nature. Hosea's portrayal of Yahweh as an injured husband gave a new impulse to the possibility already existing, the disposition to represent Him as actuated by feelings of jealousy. Since jealousy implies an attitude towards rivals, and must be reckoned among the ignoble passions, its attribution to God, the Absolute, should now be accounted an intolerable anthropomorphism.[4]

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1. Hosea, Chapter 14:5-6
2. Harper, W. R., Internation Critical Commentary, Amos and Hosea, p. 414
3. Cheyne, T. K., Cambridge Bible, Vol. Hosea, p. 89
4. Dade, William F., Old Testament in Thought of Today, p. 102

After being cut off from her lovers Israel returns to God, showing her former marriage relationship thus, "I will return unto my first husband".[1] God is pictured as the forgiving husband after his wife's infidelity, "I will betroth thee to me in faithfulness."[2] Righteousness, judgment, loving kindness, and mercies were to be brought to Israel as bridal gifts.[3] While the word "husband" is not always in direct evidence, yet the meaning of the word is often implied, for example: "They have dealt faithlessly with the Lord." Dealt faithlessly is used of adultery. Hosea is here keeping up the figure of the nation's marriage to Yahweh and characterizes the syncretism in worship as a breach of the marriage vow.[4]

Although the strongest figure used by Hosea to represent God is that of a husband, still there are references to the paternal relationship. "When Israel was a child I loved him and called my son out of Egypt."[5] "I taught Ephraim also to walk, taking them up in my arms."[6] Here is love and care.[7] Not only did Jehovah train Israel

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1. Hosea, Chapter 2:7
2. Hosea, Chapter 2:19, 20
3. Harper, W. R., International Critical Commentary, Amos and Hosea, p. 243
4. Harper, W. R., International Critical Commentary, Amos and Hosea, p. 71
5. Hosea, Chapter 8:1
6. Harper, W. R., International Critical Commentary, Amos and Hosea, p. 308
7. Hosea, Chapter 8:9

to walk, but when he was tired, Jehovah carried him in his arms.[1] In a series of lovely images Hosea pictures the beauty of Israel's childhood and youth. As 'grapes' in the wilderness Jehovah found them, as 'first ripe figs' he saw their first fathers....As a flock of docile sheep he 'tended' them in the desert, through a land of burning drought. Even as a son he called her in unto him from Egypt, and took her in his arms, and healed her little sores, taught her to walk, and drew her on with strings of love.[2] But Israel ungratefully turned from her Father to the deserved penalty of the far country. Even so, the Fatherly compassions of God are too deep to allow Him to abandon His child, and He will gather the scattered Israelites as birds that fly to their homeland.[3]

Jehovah is represented as a Considerate Master,[4] who raises the yoke from the neck and cheeks of the animal that it may eat its food more conveniently.[5]

The prophet Hosea depicts God as a Shepherd leading and feeding the lamb Israel.[6]

Another picture is portrayed in "Come, let us return unto the Lord, for he hath torn and he will heal us."[7] In the sense of healing the sick, God assumes

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1. Harper, W. R., International Critical Commentary, Amos and Hosea, p. 312
2. Scott, R., Message of Hosea, p. 57
3. Abingdon Commentary, p. 700
4. Cheyne, T. K., Cambridge Bible, Vol. Hosea, p. 100
5. Hosea, Chapter XI:4
6. Hosea, Chapter 4:16
7. Hosea, Chapter 6:1

the roll of a Healer or Physician.

Jehovah is described as a Driver in charge of a team, Israel, struggling up a steep road.[1]

God is represented as a Loving Spirit. "I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely."[2]

Yahweh is depicted as a God of Sympathy. "My repentings are kindled together." A closer rendering would be, I am wholly overcome with sympathy.[3]

Hosea described Jehovah as raining righteousness upon Israel. "Break up your fallow ground, till He come and rain righteousness upon you."[4] There is still time for Israel to seek Jehovah, till He listens to her prayer, and raineth righteous gifts of salvation upon Israel.[5]

Jehovah is depicted with tender indulgence for His people. "And I laid meat unto them."[6] Dr. Cheyne states the passage should read, "I bent towards Him and gave him food, or and (dealing) gently with Him I gave him food."[7]

Other human characteristics are ascribed to God, such as: Controversial Spirit,[8] Fierce Wrath,[9]

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1. Smith, G. A., Twelve Prophets, p. 294
2. Hosea, Chapter 14:4
3. Cheyne, T. K., Cambridge Bible, Vol. Hosea, p. 110
4. Hosea, Chapter 10:12
5. Cheyne, T. K., Cambridge Bible, Vol. Hosea, p. 106
6. Hosea, Chapter 11:4
7. Cheyne, T. K., Cambridge Bible, Vol. Hosda, p. 109
8. Hosea, Chapter 4:6
9. Hosea, Chapters 5:10, 5:14, 10:2

Forgiving Spirit,[1] Wooing Spirit,[2] High Ethical Standards,[3] and Chastising Spirit.[4]

V. Hosea's Conception of the Relation of God and Israel

A. As to Politics

The political situation in Israel was a matter of great concern to Hosea. He was living in the midst of troubled times following the death of Jeroboam. One king followed another in rapid succession. The air was surcharged with conspiracy all the time. Hosea was free in his accusations of Israel's politics. He declared the kings to be lacking the divine ordination to their office.[5] He boldly denounces the king and court for the sensuality of their conduct.[6] He threatened the royal house with destruction and the nation with exile.[7] Not the least of Israel's crimes in Hosea's eyes was thespirit of distrust in Yahweh shown by the fact that the government was working to establish alliances or secret treaties with foreign powers. Israel vacillated between tribute to Assyria and the alliance with Egypt.[8] But Hosea was certain that

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1. Hosea, Chapter 11:9
2. Hosea, Chapter 2:14
3. Hosea, Chapter 3:3
4. Hosea, Chapter 7:12
5. Hosea, Chapter 8:4
6. Hosea, Chapter 7:3-7
7. Hosea, Chapter 10:3, 9:3
8. Peters, J. P., Religion of the Hebrews, p. 221

such policies were futile.[1] Yahweh, and He alone could furnish Israel the help needed. To call in any other ally was to insult Yahweh grossly. Such alliances always involved some sort of formal acknowledgment of the god or gods of the allied power. Naturally, therefore, foreign alliances were opposed by Hosea who was loyal to Yahweh as the only God to be acknowledged by Israel.[2]

The conditions of internal disturbance and political intrigue of the period are graphically reflected in Hosea's prophecies; in fact these conditions not only furnish many of his figures but also the occasion of the prophecies.[3]

Hosea deals directly with the political questions of his day--the chaotic government, the inadequate public leadership, the futile chauvinism and fickle diplomacy that marked the decadence of the Hebrew monarchies.[4] Hosea tried to direct his people to the comprehension that a nation's real welfare consists in virtue, in brotherhood, in justice, in mercy, in industry, in well doing, loving, union of class with class, in the obedience of all to God above, in faith and heroic aspiration to work out a career

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1. Hosea, 5:13
   Hosea, 7:8-12, 14:3
2. Smith, J. M., Prophets and Their Times, p. 23
3. Cadbury, H. J., National Ideals of the Old Testament, p. 111
4. Hastings, J., Men and Women of the Bible, V. 4, p. 369

on earth worthy of God, who called them to be a nation.[1]

At first we find Hosea denouncing the priests as leaders in Israel's wickedness. Then a step forward being taken, there is added, "the house of the King," i. e., the court, including the royal family, for it is after all a fact that the king and court could control the priests. "Hear ye then, O priests; and hearken ye house of Israel; and give ye ear, O house of the King; for judgement is toward you...."[2]

The prophet foretells of destruction from an invading army. "Their princes shall fall by the sword for the rage of their tongue."[3] The leaders are everywhere represented as being primarily responsible. Upon them especially will fall the doom of the sword which Assyria will execute. The leaders who have persuaded their followers to adopt a policy hostile to Yahweh's teachings and threatenings will now suffer the misery which must surely follow. The various authorities have interpreted "insolence of their tongues" to mean "roughness, its deceptive tone, naughty boasting, pride, dependence upon Egypt as protection, mockery and scepticism,

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1. Hosea, Chapter 5:8
2. Hosea, Chapter 5:1
3. Hosea, Chapter 7:16

insolence toward Yahweh, bitterness."[1] The Assyrian nation is represented as an eagle, swooping down upon the land of Israel as an instrument of Jehovah's punishment.[2] "Because they have transgressed my covenant,"[3] the constitutional agreement which was understood to have been entered into between Israel and Yahweh at Sinai.

Hosea vehemently denounces the alliances and relations into which Israel has entered,[4] and vividly describes the nation's political status for such action. The nation has vacillated between Egypt and Assyria, now accepting the appointment of Assyria's vicegerents on the Israelitish throne; next courting Egypt through tributes. An account of the tributes of Jehu of Israel to Assyria is mentioned in the last of an inscription pictured on a black obelisk of the Assyrian king Shalmaneser.[5] Menahem of Israel also paid tribute to Assyria as we learn from the campaign of Tiglath--Pileser III, 738 B. C.[6] In 734 B. C. Pekah of Israel allied with Rezin of Damascus for the purpose of throwing

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1. Harper, W. R., International Critical Commentary, Amos and Hosea, p. 307
2. Harper, W. R., International Critical Commentary, Amos and Hosea, p. 308
3. Hosea, Chapter 8:1
4. Hosea, Chapter 10:4
5. Barton, George A., Archaeology and the Bible, p. 362
6. Barton, George A., Archaeology and the Bible, p. 426

off the Assyrian yoke. However, Tiglath--Pileser overran Israel in 733-732 B. C., placed his own choice Hoshea on the throne, and imposed a heavy Assyrian tribute. Fragmentary records of this campaign of Tiglath--Pileser III remain.[1]

"Ephraim has mixed himself among the people."[2] The meaning here is the acceptance of foreign customs and ideas which came upon Israel in connection with the opening up of the commercial relations with the outer world.[3] The tides of a lavish commerce scattered abroad the faculties of the people, and swept back upon their life alien fashions and tempers, to subdue which there was neither strength nor definiteness of national purpose.[4] "Ephraim has become a cake not turned."[5] The point of emphasis here is upon the weakness of the national character which was exhibited in the inconsistencies of which they were guilty, the lack of thoroughness with which their plans were executed, the wrong direction pursued by those in charge of national policy, and the lack of proportion in national effort.[6]

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1. Barton, George A., Archaeology and the Bible, p. 356
2. Hosea, 7:8
3. Harper, W. R., International Critical Commentary, Amos and Hosea, p. 301
4. Smith, George Adams, Twelve Prophets, p. 27
5. Hosea, 7:8
6. Harper, W. R., International Critical Commentary, Amos and Hosea, p. 302

Strangers have devoured his strength and he knows it not.[1] "Ephraim is also like a silly dove, they call to Egypt, they go to Assyria."[2] Like the dove flying thoughtlessly from one danger to another, Israel has pursued a policy of hesitation and indecision controlled now by the Assyrian party, now by the Egyptian.[3] "Alas for them that they have strayed from me."[4] The special sin rebuked is seeking the help of Assyria and Egypt.

Hosea combined foreign alliances and trust in cavalry with idolatry. The prophet calls Israel to denunciation of both Egypt and Assyria, causing them to speak thus: "Assyria shall not save us; we shall not ride upon horses...."[5] The prophet objected to resort to war, because it showed a lack of faith such as became infidelity.[6]

Political destruction, Hosea prophecied, was to come also through eternal dissolution, through anarchy and civil war. The figure of God as a moth, employed here,[7] denotes a slow but certain approach of the calamity.

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1. Hosea, Chapter 7:9
2. Hosea, Chapter 7:11
3. Harper, W. R., International Critical Commentary, Amos and Hosea, p. 304
4. Hosea, Chapter 7:13
5. Hosea, Chapter 14:3
6. Cadbury, H. J., National Ideals in the Old Testament, p. 72
7. Hosea, Chapter 5:12

"And so Ephraim saw her sickness, and Israel her sore."[1] This figure represents a political sore as well as moral deterioration.

B. As to Religion and Ethics

1. Denunciation of Israel's Worship

Hosea thinks of Israel, not as a state but as a family, not as much as a government, but as an individual, either child or wife. It is everywhere the personal attitude that is made most of. Regarding the nation as a unity with a soul of its own, Hosea expects it to pursue one purpose, and to act with a personal will.[2] Because so much emphasis is laid upon the personal element, the faithlessness of Israel in the matter of acts of worship appears all the greater. The physical and sensual character of the cultus, taken over from the Canaanitish worship of Baalim, was wholly foreign and repugnant to Hosea's conception of the truly spiritual relation of Yahweh to His people. His opposition to calf-worship in particular was in a large respect due to its carnal tendencies. These things were fundamentally antagonistic to the new conception of Yahweh for which Hosea stood; therefore, it is the case that denunciation of the cultus occupies

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1. Hosea, Chapter 5:13
2. Welch, A. C., Religion of Israel under the Kingdom, p. 112

a very large place in the utterances of Hosea.[1]

Hosea was the first known prophet to attack image worship.[2] His conception of God was too spiritual to permit so crass a representation of Yahweh as an idol in human or animal form. He derided the idea that men by their hands could make God.[3] He was very much opposed to the idea that the ox or the calf should symbolize Yahweh to His people. The materialistic thinking appeared very absurd to the prophet and caused him to put scorn in the phrase "men kissing calves!"[4] It was because of such sensuous conceptions and practices that Hosea came to the firm conviction that the people and their official guides in religion knew nothing about God.[5] The prophet's diagnosis of the guilt of Israel is an instance of the penetrating insight granted to a soul made sensitive by keen sorrow. Outwardly, Israel was not faithless to her God. She frequented the sacred festivals, offered the customary sacrifices, performed the traditional ritual; and she did all this as the service of Jehovah. Nevertheless, Hosea charged her with apostasy.[6] The God, Hosea knew was a great, spiritual God; a God whose whole being cared

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1. Harper, W. R., International Critical Commentary, Amos and Hosea, p. cli
2. Hosea, Chapters 4:12, 17; 11:12; 14:3
3. Hosea, Chapters 8:6; 14:3
4. Hosea, Chapter 13:2, cf 8:5f; 10:5f
5. Smith, J. M. P., The Prophets and Their Times, p. 62
6. Hastings, J., Men and Women of the Bible, Vol. 4, p. 371

supremely for moral things, not for physical things, a God who meant this world to be the means to an end, to be a human platform on which a human drama was to be played, a scaffolding which a temple of eternal human character of goodness was to be built up, a kingdom of heaven and earth. Israel's God bore the same name as Hosea's God. But Israel had utterly transformed the character of God. The corruption was doubtless growing deeper each year.[1]

Israel is represented as going astray from Yahweh,[2] and going a whoring after other gods. These gods were the Canaanitish Baalim who were looked upon as the givers of the products of the soil. The figure "becoming lovers of raisin cakes"[3] refers to adopting the customs of the Canaanitish cult. They do worship Yahweh as a cource of material blessings, but they have corrupted His worship so that it pertains to the cultus of the Baalim and they might as well be worshiping the latter.[4] "And I will cause her to cease all her mirth, her feast days, her Sabbaths...."[5] During these festivals corrupt Yahweh worship has prevailed, according to Hosea,

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1. Hastings, J., Men and Women of the Bible, Vol. 4, p. 371
2. Hosea, Chapter 1:2
3. Hosea, Chapter 3:1
4. Harper, W. R., International Critical Commentary, Amos and Hosea, p. 228
5. Hosea, Chapter 2:11

and even the entire cultus, though nominally carried on in honor of Yahweh, were in reality rites and sensual orgies devoted to the Baalim. The nature of their worship was such as to give them a false idea of Yahweh's character.[1] In the coming days Yahweh promises to utterly destroy all trace and memory of the Baalim worship.[2]

The root sin from which all others spring is unfaithfulness to Jehovah. Israel is a harlot and an adulteress. She has broken the marriage vow by religious apostasy. The false gods for which she has deserted Jehovah are her lovers. The Phoenician nature worship was essentially immoral, and it is not always easy to decide whether Hosea is speaking literally or figuratively. Probably he regarded the abominations connected with worship of Baal and Ashtoreth as an outward symbol of the spiritual sin, and did not care to distinguish sharply.[3] "Ephraim is wedded to idols"[4] of such a character as the relationship between the idolater and his god. The accusation is not of following strange gods, but of using idols to represent Yahweh, as in the case of calves and the Baalim.

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1. Harper, W. R., International Critical Commentary, Amos and Hosea, p. 233-234
2. Hosea, Chapter 2:19
3. Hastings, J. W., Men and Women of the Bible, p. 374
4. Hosea, Chapter 4:17

The worship of Yahweh under the form of the golden calf in Israel, which began according to the historical narrative in Kings, under Jeroboam 1, in the 10th century, was the most conspicuous form, however, of the authorized national use of an image. The calf image may be closely akin to the cherubim of the Temple at Jerusalem; but the latter, even though they symbolized the presence of Yahweh, were not apparently conspicuously presented to the eye as objects of worship. The cherubim were merely adjuncts to the ark, which latter was the special representation of Yahweh in the Jerusalem temple. The calves, on the other hand, seem to have been openly displayed to the people as the representatives of Yahweh, the objects of His indwelling, and hence they were images in a sense in which the cherubim, even granting that the latter may have been bull-shaped, were not.[1]

Hosea opposed the worship of calves as representations of the deity, for it characterized the debased spirit of the religious outlook of the people.[2] He seemed to realize that it was impossible to represent the mighty Yahweh in any material form whatsoever.[3]

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1. Peters, J. P., The Religion of the Hebrews, p. 100
2. Partridge Maurice, Biblical and Semitic Symbolism, p. 88
3. Robinson, T. H., Prophecy and Prophet, p. 83
   Hosea, Chapter 13:4

Hosea's biggest aim is to set forth the moral nature as opposed to the altogether non-moral and quasi-physical nature of the union supposed to exist between the heathen deity and his worshiper. Jehovah is not more loving than righteous. His union with the people may be, and must be able to command a response of love in its own object.[1]

Nowhere save on the Cross itself is sin made to appear more horrible and loathsome than in the thought of Hosea. To him it is rejection or still worse the betrayal of love.[2]

The immorality of Israel is pictured even more vividly by Hosea than by Amos. The situation was the darkest possible (v. s.); for the land is full of "harlotry" and "adultery."[3] The fact that this general immorality is in part due to the Canaanitish influence, makes the prophet's case all the stronger from his point of view. His lamentation is frequently and strongly expressed.[4] He traces many of the moral disorders of the time to the way in which the priests had discharged or failed to discharge their teaching function. "Yahweh hath a

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1. Hastings, J. W., Men and Women of the Bible, Vol. 4, p. 574
2. Robinson, T. H., Prophecy and Prophets, p. 78
3. Hosea, Chapter 4:13
4. Hosea, Chapters 4:8, 5:1, 10:13, 5:4, 11:12

controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because there is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land. There is naught but false swearing and murder and theft and adultery; they break out and blood toucheth blood....My people are destroyed for the lack of knowledge, I reject thee from being priest unto me, and as thou hast forgotten the laws of God, I forget thy children."[1] Against the evils of the land Hosea utters scathing rebuke, and makes an earnest effort to stir the public conscience, and preaches that God is a loving Father.[2] The strange thing is that Hosea finds in religion itself the responsibility for the situation. Hosea condemns those of his time, priests and people who, although busy in observance of sacrifice, have forgotten Yahweh.[3] They have nothing in mind but offerings, he continues, and they forget the divine instructions delivered by the prophets. "I have written to them the great things of my law, but they were counted as a strange thing."[4] "They sacrifice flesh for the sacrifice of my offerings and eat it."[5] This maintains that sacrifice with them

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1. Hosea, Chapter 4:1-2, 6
1. Gray, George B., Sacrifices in the Old Testament, p. 222
2. Harper, W. R., International Critical Commentary, Amos and Hosea, p. cli
3. Hosea, Chapter 8:11
4. Harper, W. R., International Critical Commentary, Amos and Hosea, p. 523
5. Hosea, Chapter 8:13

is merely formal.[1]

The people in their celebration acknowledge the harvest to be a gift of the god of the land in return for their sedulous worship; thus making material gain the goal and reward of worship; while it is the prophet's contention that divine blessings are bestowed for real worth and character.[2] The love of Yahweh, as interpreted by Hosea, is not love as it had been grossly conceived in the worship of the old Semitic goddesses of fertility, but the pure love of an affectionate husband, a love that survives the greatest wrong. In his interpretation of the love of Yahweh, Hosea supplied a new motive, that being the most powerful, for reforms and ethical righteousness.[3] The prophet Hosea had something to say on the various ethical topics of special character. He does not lay down any rules on the proper conduct of the members of the family towards one another, but he does tell the experience of a husband and father of the highest type, himself, and thus most powerfully impresses the serious reader.[4] The prophet insists on the right sort of conduct toward other men as essential to the true worship of

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1. Harper, W. R., International Critical Commentary, Amos and Hosea, p. 323
2. Harper, W. R., International Critical Commentary, Amos and Hosea, p. 427
3. Barton, G. A., Religion of Israel, p. 160
4. Mitchell, H. G., Ethics of the Old Testament, p. 129

Jehovah,[1] but he says far more about the immorality, actual and figurative, of the contemporary worship. His chief emphasis falls on the idea of religion as a right inward relation to God.[2] We might say that Amos presents religion in terms of morality, while Hosea presents morality in terms of religion. Schleiermacher in a metaphor drawn from music, has finely suggested the true relation between morality and religion. "A man's special calling," he says, "is the melody of his life, and it remains a simple, meager series of notes, unless religion with its endlessly rich variety, accompany it with all its notes, and raise the simple song to a full voiced harmony." The melody of Amos was harmonized by Hosea.[3]

Hosea's own deepening ethical conception of Yahweh as the guardian of civic righteousness has given him a keen eye for the moral failings of his people. Injustice, social corruption, reliance on a Canaanitish Yahweh cult, and foreign political alliances, the prophet believes, have left Yahweh no alternative but the destruction of the nation. But the language in which he expresses this conviction, as a threat from Yahweh, is so full of

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1. Hosea, Chapters 4:1-3, 6:6, 10:12
2. Robinson, H. W., Abingdon Commentary, p. 759
3. Robinson, H. W., Abingdon Commentary, p. 759

savage passion, that it grates upon the ear: "Therefore am I to them a lion;[1] as a leopard[2] will I watch by the way; I will meet them as a bear[3] that is bereaved of her whelps, I will devour them as a lion, like a wild beast tear them to pieces.[4]

Of all of this worship, Yahweh was about to make a clean sweep. It was rooted in the land, and it took hold of men's minds from the time when they came in possession of the land. Accordingly, one of the reasons why Yahweh must cast them out of the land is to get rid of it all. The only means to separate them from worship which has become a part of their national life is that, in the national overthrow, the high places should be cast down, and the thorn and the thistle should come up on their altars.[5] Yahweh must cast His people out of His house, and cause all their offerings to come to an end.[6]

Nothing seems to be more significant of Hosea's attitude than that he pronounces the absence of all worship a penalty, even a supreme penalty.[7] Their bread shall be

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1. Hosea, Chapter 13:7
2. Hosea, Chapter 13:7
3. Hosea, Chapter 13:8
4. Hosea, Chapter 13:7-8
   Bade, William F., Old Testament in the Light of Today, p. 130
5. Hosea, Chapter 10:8
6. Hosea, Chapter 9:8
7. Hosea, Chapter 9:4

for their appetite, it shall not come into the house of the Lord; that was to be the result of their being cast out of Yahweh's house, and it was more grievous than any mere expulsion thence.[1] "What will ye do in the day of solemn assembly?"[2] All the acts of worship, private and national, will cease, because Yahweh has broken off relationship with his people; and the life of the nation was thereby to become so much meaner a thing. They shall go with their flocks and their herds, (evidently the means of sacrifice) to seek the Lord; and they shall not find Him; He has withdrawn Himself from them. Hosea thought of their life as a people, not merely as having lost something, but as having lost a great thing--the means of expressing how absolute was its dependence on God's mercy, and how deep was its gratitude for His care. God to Hosea was the Giver of the nation's life and its life only remained at its highest when it retained the means of directly owning the renewing of its dependence on Him.[3]

2. God's Requirement of Men

Since God denounces Israel's worship, since He rejects her sacrifices, since He rebukes political life,

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1. Welch, A. C., Religion of Israel under the Kingdom, p. 127
2. Hosea, Chapter 9:5
3. Welch, A. C., Religion of Israel under the Kingdom, p. 127

and despises her standards of morality, what then is the course that He would have Israel to follow? What are the requirements He would make of one desiring to follow the Divine way?

Hosea feels that Yahweh is more than a Sovereign Lord demanding obedience to himself and justice between man and man in His kingdom. In his interpretation of the love of Yahweh, as we have already noted, Hosea supplied a new motive, and that the most powerful for reform and ethical righteousness. Yahweh did not stand apart from the struggles of sinful Israel as a threatening judge, requiring justice; He stood ready to help with all the inspiring influences of an infinitely loving companionship. Hosea not only proclaims Yahweh as a God who loves righteousness,[1] champions the oppressed, punishes wickedness, and takes no delight in ritual sacrifice;[2] but he employs the various figures of the tenderest family[3] relationships as symbols of Yahweh's love to make his contemporaries realize this important aspect of Yahweh's character, this motive to righteous living.[4] Dr. Povah's interpretation of Chapter Xi:1-9 is "For I am God and not man in the midst of you as a transcendent one."[5] And in return,

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1. Hosea, Chapter 10:12
2. Hosea, Chapter 6:3
3. Hosea, Chapter 11:1, 11:4, 2:7
4. Barton, G. A., Religion of Israel, p. 101
5. Povah, J., Hosea, p. 33

from Israel, "I desired mercy and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings,"[1] What Yahweh delights in is love in which obedience is emphasized. This love is not the love for God as distinguished from the love of one's fellowmen, but both.[2] Aben Ezra states that it is steadfast love which the prophet means, not that which is like a cloud.[3] The prophet means to emphasize the right conduct toward other men as essential to the true worship of God, along with the right inward relation to God.[4] God demands reality and will not be satisfied by empty professions or by outward offerings. These are of no value except as the expression of a sincere intention to observe the terms of the covenant. They are not a substitute for this intention. "Devotions are not devotion."[5]

Hosea's predictions are conditional. Blessings or disaster are dependent upon the moral attitude of Samaria. This prediction of doom is conditional upon perseverance in 'sin.' When, on the other hand, he foretells of the happy consummation, this consummation is conditional upon repentance.[6] God's favor or wrath

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1. Hosea, Chapter 6:6
2. Harper, W. R., International Critical Commentary, Amos and Hosea, p. 286
3. Cheyne, T. K., Cambridge Bible, Hosea, p. 70
4. Robinson, H. W., Abingdon Commentary, p. 759
5. Scott, R., Message of Hosea, p. 51
6. Scott, R., Message of Hosea, p. 34

depends upon Israel's faithfulness or unfaithfulness.[1]

"Sow for yourselves righteousness; reap the fruit of love; break up your fallow ground."[2] Here are three successive commands, each dependent upon the other, and all three making up the total activity which in the prophet's thought is demanded of Israel. The second is not to be taken as the consequence of the first; the three are necessary, as the preparatory steps toward seeking Yahweh.[3] "Sow for yourselves righteousness."[4] Act righteously, let your deeds be righteous, direct your lives in such a manner as that the result will be a proper sense of justice toward your fellows." "Reap the fruits of love." Let your lives be filled with the spirit of love, let the outcome of your activity be characterized by love, love for God and fellowman; perhaps piety expresses the idea as well as any other English word. "Break up your fallow ground."[5] The third most significant of the prophet's injunctions; before sowing the seed prepare the ground which has hitherto been neglected, and in consequence has become full of weeds and thorns, i. e., plough virgin soil; in other words, no result may be expected unless the old habits are changed and new character formed.[6]

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1. Peters, J. P., Religion of the Hebrew People, p. 15
2. Hosea, Chapter 10:12
3. Harper, W. R., International Critical Commentary, Amos and Hosea, p. 355
4. Hosea, Chapter 10:12
5. Hosea, Chapter 10:12
6. Harper, W. R., International Critical Commentary, Amos and Hosea, p. 358

The gist of this passage, therefore, is that the fundamental requirement of social ethics is good will, and good will reveals itself in corresponding activity for the common well being.[1]

VI. Hosea's Contribution to Religious Thought

The assurance of Yahweh's good will had formed the basis of Israel's religion from the beginning. What Israel needed was to have the love of Yahweh exhibited in a striking way, that men would see that it was the deepest attribute of the divine nature, an attribute that would be trusted in spite of all human waywardness and suffering, an attribute that made certain the ultimate solution of the problem of redemption. This Hosea did for the Hebrew thought.[2]

Amos had aroused the conscience of Israel to a perception of the real state of affairs; but, aside from the most general injunction, "Seek Yahweh and ye shall live,"[3] he refers neither to the restoration, nor to any plan for securing such a restoration. That Yahweh loved His people, and had manifested this love on many national occasions, was evident. This love was indeed

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1. Mitchell, H. G., Ethics of the Old Testament, p. 132
2. Knudson, A. C., Religious Teachings of the Old Testament, p. 185
3. Amos, Chapter 5:4

the basis in some measure of the ethical development thus far worked out. But although this love was already recognized, there remained, in view of the emphasis which Amos lays on universal law, another problem to be solved, viz., "to prove in God so great and a new mercy as was capable of matching the law,"[1] in other words, it was necessary for a prophet "to arise with as keen a conscience of law as Amos himself, and yet affirm that love was greater still; to admit that Israel was doomed, and yet "not" promise their redemption," but show that redemption, i. e. repentence, is possible; and that the basis of this redemption is as fundamental as is the basis of law itself. This was what Hosea had to do; and in doing it he is marking out the lines of all subsequent prophecy.[2]

The distinctive thing about Hosea, among the great National Idealists of Israel, is neither in his diagnosis of the nation's faults, nor in his certainty of its doom, nor even, as has been thought in his hopefulness of its repentance. It is rather, the contribution of the motive to which he appeals in his plea for reform,

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1. Smith, G. A., The Twelve Prophets, p. 227
2. Harper, W. R., International Critical Commentary, Amos and Hosea, p. cxlvii

and the analogy by which he makes his motive clear. Hosea has an appeal to national loyalty. This is not the loyalty of a citizen to the state, nor of the state to its self-interest, but the loyalty of the whole nation to what might be expected of it from the highest outside moral view point. In religious terms Hosea's appeal was for a response to the love of God.[1]

As pointed out before, Hosea was able to bring out this new idea in the conception of Divine love through his own experience. The undestroyed love for the woman who left him not only inspired Hosea to seek her out and reclaim her, but it enabled him to enter into the very heart of God. Did not Yahweh feel toward Israel as Hosea felt toward Gomer? Was there not the same feeling of righteous indignation and compassionate pity? Was not Yahweh's love for his bride Israel at once her condemnation and her ultimate ground of hope? Thus does Hosea enrich the old idea of marriage between God and His people with a profound moral content. This is the contribution to theology of the Old Testament which Hosea was enabled to make from his own bitter experience; it is this which creates the depth and atmosphere of the picture he paints. "How can I give thee up?.... My heart is turned within

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1. Cadbury, H.J., National Ideas of the Old Testament, p. 112.

me." "This," said George Adam Smith, "is the deepest, if not highest passage of the book of Hosea--the breaking forth of that exhaustless mercy of the Most High which no sin of man can bar back nor wear out."[1] In emphasizing Yahweh's tender love for Israel, the wife of his youth, Hosea strengthens the indestructible relation of Yahweh and His people, giving it also an ethical basis.[2] He set the grace of God on high as had not been done before. He took the tenderest and most intimate human relations and made them symbols, brown lights of the divine affection. "There is," says George Adam Smith, "no truth uttered by other prophets about Divine Grace, which we do not find the germ in him."[3] He is the first prophet of grace, Israel's first evangelist.[4] He builds on the story of the captivity in Egypt, and the deliverance therefrom, drawing from the past a lesson for the future.[5]

There are some exceedingly modern notes in Hosea's message. He saw society as an organism, a life lived out by the nation as one vital whole. What affected one part, affected all. There are distinct laws by which

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1. Hosea, Chapter 11:8
   Smith, G. A., The Book of the Twelve Prophets, p. 297
2. Peters, J. W., Religion of the Hebrews, p. 431
3. Smith, G. A., Twelve Prophets, p. 230
4. Knudson, A. C., Religious Teachings of the Old Testament, p. 185
5. Peters, J. W., Religion of the Hebrews, p. 220

this life works itself out, and to violate these is to suffer, whether we know it or not.[1]

Professor Cornill says since this thought in which humanity has been educated and which has consoled it for nearly three thousand years was spoken by Hosea, we must reckon him among the greatest religious geniuses which the world has ever produced. He came nearer than any other Old Testament character to the perception of that sublime truth which is the summit of all revelation: "God is Love," the love he proclaimed was for a nation and people.[2]

The prophet brought civilization with all of its blessings into harmony with the loftiest religion, and averted the peril that might have arisen if religion had been stereotyped. No religion can be permanent unless it is sufficiently flexible to adjust itself in very different social conditions, and the service rendered by Hosea in this respect was of eminent value.[3]

Although the authenticity of the following passage has been seriously questioned, still it seems to contain the sum and substance of Hosea's message to such an extent that the writer of this thesis desires to quote

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1. Scott, R., Message of Hosea, p. 70
2. Thorn, G. W., Prophets of Israel and Message Today, p. 55
3. Peake, A. S., Brotherhood in the Old Testament

it:

> "Who is wise,
> And he shall understand these things;
> Prudent,
> And he shall know them.
> For the ways of the Lord are righteous;
> And the just shall walk therein,
> But the transgressors shall fall therein."[1]

The message is that the world with its nations and its churches is no haphazard place in which things happen by chance as foolish people suppose, but a place of strict and infallible law. What has happened in Israel has happened because it could not help happening. The righteous laws of God vindicate themselves either by way of reward or by the way of punishment. "Things are what they are, and consequences will be what they will be. Why then should we deceive ourselves?" "The constitution of nature is what it is." These great words sum up not merely the philosophy of Bishop Butler's, but the philosophy of Hosea.[2] Our age is as superficial as Hosea's, and many of our people do not desire profound thinking and preaching.[3] But Hosea's message is as applicable today as when he first preached it. God is still a God of love; his requirements are the same as formerly, his punishment and rewards are dependent upon our conduct.

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1. Scott, E., Message of Hosea, p. 78
2. Scott, E., Message of Hosea, p. 78
3. Rice, O. T., Old Testament in the Life of Today, p. 48

VII. The Summary

The purpose of this thesis has been a systematic study of the prophet Hosea's Conception of God. It has been discovered that Hosea's call and message as well as his final conception of the relationship existing between God and man came through tragic personal experiences of his career. We have learned that the incidents in his own married life were a reflection of Yahweh's experience with Israel, and that this personal interpretation gave strength and meaning to his message. In this message we have seen revealed Hosea's idea of God's requirements of man. We have noticed that Hosea's conception of the Divine has enlarged upon and contributed to the conception held by the prophets before him. We have been deeply impressed by Hosea's main note of forgiving love, and we feel that his message holds worth today even as it did when he first preached it.

A larger vision of God has often entered a soul through a door opened by sorrow. According to the view of the story of Hosea's marriage which has prevailed for a generation, this is supposed to be true of Hosea. A man of tender and loyal affections had married a wife whom he dearly loved, but who proved to be untrue to him, and who presented him with children not his own. In the midst of this tragic situation, Hosea discovered that this was Yahweh's method of awakening in him the spirit

of prophecy, for he, through this experience saw a revelation of the relation between Yahweh and Israel. The covenant of Sinai was a covenant of marriage. The unethical worship, which was directed by the Hebrews in reality to Baal, is to Hosea the infidelity of a wife. But the Heavenly Husband was not less loving than the earthly, and the measure of His own unquenchable love for Gomer became to Hosea a revelation of Yahweh's unconquerable love for Israel.

To the children whom the prophet learned were not his, he gave names of prophetic significance, and they became walking sermons. Gomer left Hosea's home and led the life of a fallen woman until she fell into slavery; then the prophet brought her back and placed her apart where she was protected from her own evil propensities and tried to win back her affections. The prophetic significance of the marriage is clear. Israel, the bride of Yahweh, is disloyal and unworthy of Yahweh's great love. Therefore she must go into exile away from the presence of Yahweh until she learns the worth of Yahweh's love and longs for renewed fellowship with him. But, after this period of exile, she will be brought back home and given a new chance. So that from the very beginning of Hosea's prophetic career, he evidently preached both punishment and deliverance.

Hosea's message may be summed up briefly in connection with a very few propositions. (a). Israel is wicked through and through, and her condition morally is that of rottenness. (b). Israel is politically doomed, the last stages of decay having now been reached. (c). Yahwen is Israel's father, with all of a father's love and interest; He is Israel's husband, with all of a husband's love and devotion. (d). Israel fails to comprehend Yahweh's desires -- she has a totally wrong conception of Him; in short, Israel does not know Yahweh. (e). Israel deceives herself in her acts of repentance, but there is a true repentance which consists in turning back to Yahweh. (f). Israel's present attitude toward Yahweh's love, means, in the end her total destruction.

Hosea has set forth clearly his idea of the requirements which God makes of man. More sacrifice and formal worship is not acceptable to the heavenly Father. Three successive commands are given which make up the total of the activity which in the prophet's thought is demanded of humanity. (1). Act righteously; (2). Let your lives be filled with love for God and your fellowmen. (3). Change old habits that are a detriment to one's life, and add new ones that will help to build strong character and cause the individual to bear fruit. Hosea

also felt that the world is a place of strict infallible law in the sight of ~~Jehovah~~ Yahweh. The righteous laws of God vindicate themselves either by the way of reward or the way of punishment.

Preceding prophets had recognized God's love for His people, but Hosea drew a large circle which included the other prophets' conceptions of the relationship between God and man. While Amos is the stern moralist, sitting in judgment on his people, pronouncing them guilty, and almost rejoicing to see that justice is done, Hosea suffers in sympathy with the condemned and feels all the pain and shame that are to fall upon them as if they were his own.

Hosea's argument in his prophecy is of the heart and not the head. His revelation of God is a revelation of love which can be conceived under human analogies, and whose workings are to be understood not by abstract reasonings, but by sympathy of a heart which has sounded the depths of human affection and knows in its own experience what love demands of its object.

Hosea is the first prophet of grace, and he sounds the first great evangelistic note. Dr. Rice thinks he lacked but two things in preaching the truth of the prodigal son: he confined his conception of the love of God to the nation as a whole in neglect of the

individual; he thought only, so far as one can see, of Israel rather than of sinners of all races. However, he brought to the human race the message we all most yearn to hear: that is, God is a God that cares, that loves, that suffers, and that never forsakes.[1]

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1. Rice, J. A., Old Testament in Life of Today, p. 46

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